

Record

THE BAPTIST

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

Donations to hurricane relief effort

The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) is accepting donations to fund both the immediate needs and long-term Mississippi Baptist disaster relief efforts along the Gulf Coast and throughout the state. Checks should be made payable to MBCB, with "Hurricane Relief" noted on the memo line, and mailed to MBCB Business Office, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Fully 100% of the donations will be used directly for hurricane relief. More information on how to contribute can be obtained by calling (601) 292-3206, or e-mailing mbcdbdisasterrelief@mbcb.org.

Katrina relief efforts continue

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

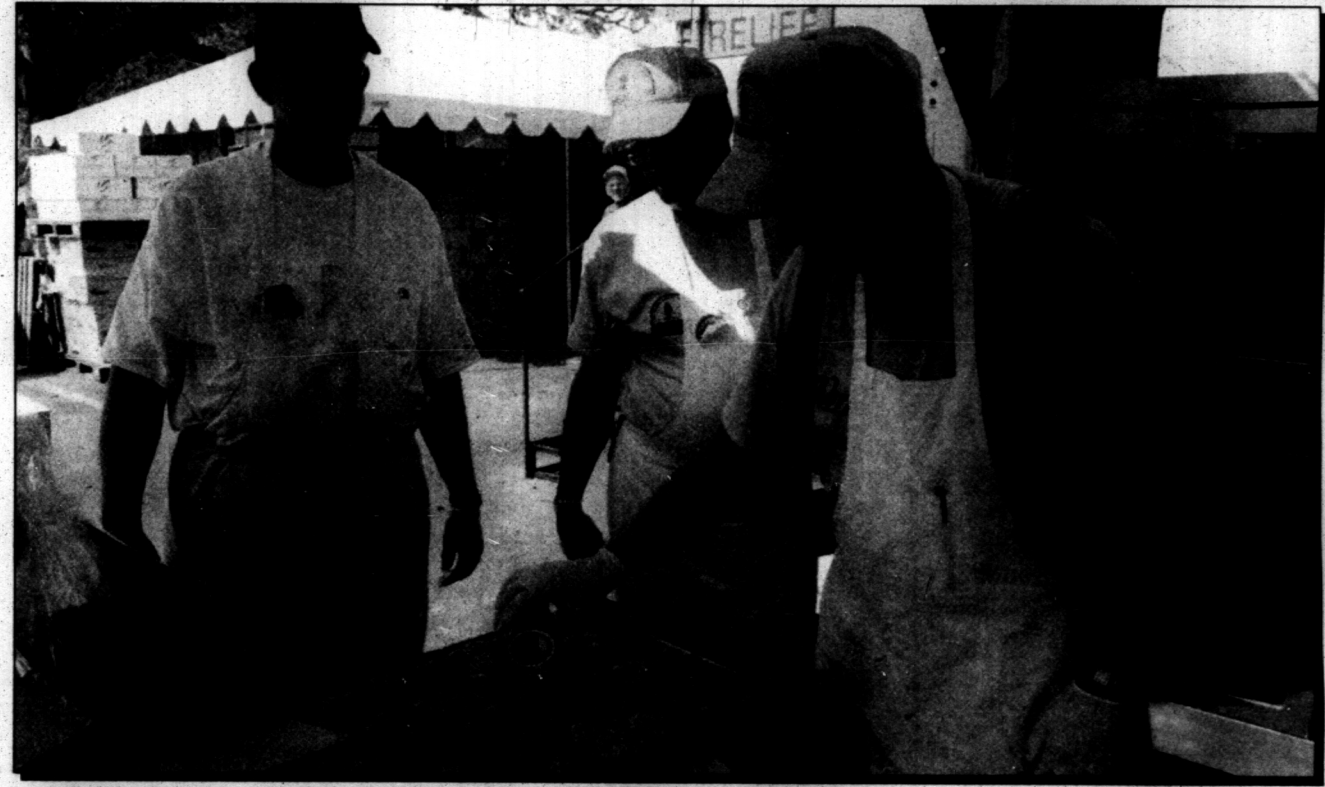
It has been months since the monster Hurricane Katrina devastated the Mississippi Gulf Coast as well as inland areas of the state, Louisiana, and Alabama. Much has been accomplished, but much remains to be done.

Tales of generosity abound. At one seven-year-old's birthday party, the children, rather than giving birthday presents, gave gift cards to be used by children on the Coast. A note from one church stated, "We are a small church with 24 adults, but we wanted to do what we could." The note was attached to a check for more than \$4,000.

At a Nov. 28 meeting at Central Hills Retreat near Kosciusko of the "Blue Caps" of the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force, hurricane response was analyzed during a period of extensive debriefing. When the Task Force feeding unit is sent out, Blue Caps are responsible for managing the food preparation and the individual workers ("Yellow Caps"). They serve under a "White Cap," the person tasked with overall administration as well as acting as a liaison between the unit, the Salvation Army, and the American Red Cross.

Blue Caps, then, have a very strong sense of the needs "on the ground," and bring experience and expertise to any disaster response. Jim Didlake, director of the Men's Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, told the group, "First, thanks for all that's gone on. We took a mess and turned it into a tremendous response. We watched this storm develop for some time, and were able to order enough food for 10,000 meals to be pre-placed." Each feeding unit should be supplied by three trailers from the American Red Cross — "a reefer, a refrigerator, and a dry box," according to Didlake. "Southern Baptists are going to need to develop a two-week plan during which we don't depend on anyone else to get what we need — we need to be self-sustaining," he said.

Typically, the Red Cross places orders for food, based on the menu requests from the Baptist feeding units and the number of meals to be prepared. Then, the food is delivered to the site and prepared by the units. In the early days of the response, food needs were determined "on the fly."



ON DUTY — Members of the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force begin meal preparations in early September for victims of Hurricane Katrina along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The Task Force, which is composed of trained volunteers from Mississippi Baptist churches, was headquartered at First Church, Biloxi, for over two months and prepared a record of 16,700 meals in one day. Long-range recovery operations funded and staffed by Mississippi Baptists are still underway on the Gulf Coast. (BR photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

The scope of Katrina proved to be a challenge. While law enforcement on the Coast was planning to operate in the early hours after the storm, Biloxi and Bay St. Louis police and the local sheriff offices weren't able to respond as quickly because as many as nine out of 10 vehicles were destroyed. Additionally, communication problems were rampant. Land line phones were out, as was most cellular service.

At First Church, Biloxi, Mississippi Baptists were first on the scene. Vernon Boteler, a member of Briarhill Church in Florence, was among the very first to reach the Coast. "I think it was Wednesday or Thursday before the storm hit we were put on alert," said Boteler. "So by the Tuesday after the storm, we were at Camp Garaywa. We were given our destination, and then the feeding unit was sent down from Central Hills. We set the unit up and made preparations to serve a meal on the site. There was no Red Cross, no one. We were the first responders."

"The unit fed the first meal for Wednesday lunch. One Red Cross unit showed up Wednesday afternoon, and later several more came. We were able to send out our first off-site meals Thursday," Boteler continued. Conditions were difficult. There was no electricity, no potable water at the church. Volunteers dug latrines in the woods adjacent to the church, with a blue tarpaulin providing scant privacy. Temperatures were in the 90's.

"We served 500 meals that first day," said Boteler. "Then Thursday we fed probably 1000 meals on site. By Saturday, we were serving 5000 meals at the church. We got our first shipment of food Saturday — prior to that, we were just serving what we had on the truck."

God worked. "There were three or four occasions where we were either running out of water or food," said Boteler, "and we would've been forced to shut the unit down. God provided at the last minute, and we'd have a delivery."

"We were doing things we typically don't do," said Boteler. "For instance, we aren't accustomed to operating a distribution center (for clothes, cleaning supplies, some food items). We didn't have the manpower to do that, but it was something we felt like we needed to do."

Other discussions dealt with the use and training of volunteers, working with other entities such as the Red Cross and Salvation Army, and cooperation between the North American Mission Board, other state conventions, and even individuals and churches. According to Didlake, "We had identified ten sites on the coast to set up feeding units. After the storm, only four were useable; six had been destroyed. Where we had identified 56 areas in the state for units to be deployed, we were only able to service 28 sites."

The primary feeding unit can prepare 20,000 meals, if it is staffed around the clock. After Katrina made landfall, the unit prepared 16,700 meals in one day. When Didlake asked, "What do we need to do differently?" someone quipped, "Have smaller disasters!"

The Men's Ministry Department can offer training for both associations and individual churches that teaches disaster relief response. The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board also has the aforementioned Disaster Relief Task Force, which currently consists of about 150 volunteers and is by invitation only.



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Slamming Mississippi Baptists

We can all take pride that Mississippi Baptists were at the forefront of the recent opposition movement to deny casinos legislative permission to relocate their gambling halls inland along the Gulf Coast. The Mississippi Legislature of course approved the inland move, but by a much narrower vote than some observers had predicted. Indeed, many legislators were surprised by the number of calls, letters, and e-mails from constituents who disapproved of the inland move.

The tidal wave of anti-gambling contacts no doubt had an impact on the vote, so let's give all the glory to God for fighting the good fight and let's remain vigilant on this hot-button issue. It's always better to be counted among those on the side of right, regardless of who ends up winning.

One of the most troubling aspects of the recent battle, right up there with the legislators who gave in to the scores of gambling lobbyists who helped muscle through the legislation, is the manner in which religious people opposed to gambling expansion were treated by the editorialists of

the state's secular news media — which receive millions of dollars in advertising each year from gambling interests.

While there were balanced and thoughtful editorials and columns by writers such as Lloyd Gray of the Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal in

Tupelo, there were other editorialists and columnists who stooped to question the well-intentioned motives of religious anti-gambling groups and, really for the first time, dismiss those groups as interlopers unworthy to be a part of the public discussion on expanding gambling.

Sid Salter, the pro-gambling Perspective section editor at The Clarion-Ledger in Jackson, in a September 28 column offered a passing compliment to Mississippi Baptists for their Katrina disaster relief work — and then pronounced their opposition to allowing casinos to move on to land "ill-conceived."

Salter's goal, as he pointed out in the column, was to "deflate some of the religious demagoguery being interjected into the debate of how the ravaged Gulf Coast rebuilds and how the 15,000 residents there employed by the gaming industry can get back to work."

The definition of demagoguery in Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary is, "a leader who makes use of popular prejudices and false claims and promises in order to gain power." That's apparently who Salter believes Mississippi Baptists are: power-hungry liars looking out only for ourselves.

Steve Stewart, pro-gambling editor of The Meridian Star, also sought to marginalize Mississippi Baptists' opposition to expanding gambling. In an October 15 column, he opined, "In an era of poll-driven politics, a little conviction...is refreshing. Is there a point, though, where principle yields to naivete and

becomes detrimental to a cause? Put another way, is there such a thing as being principled to a fault? The Mississippi Baptist Convention seems determined to find out."

Stewart also took this writer to task for the "scathing critique" of Governor Haley Barbour that appeared in this space after the gambling special session, terming it "political hyperbole" — in other words, not to be taken seriously.

Paul Gallo, pro-gambling morning host on the statewide SuperTalk radio network, also took the low road in slamming Mississippi Baptists for their opposition to expanding gambling. Bereft of any intelligent argument to refute the obvious moral downside of gambling that Mississippi Baptists were stressing, he resorted to name-calling and sarcasm — the twin refuges of a man with no valid point to make.

These are but three examples; there are likely many more. Mississippi Baptists must be on to something, because the news media members of the state's gambling/political complex are obviously nervous about our intention to be involved in the public marketplace of ideas.

What else could explain their visceral reaction to the honest concerns of Mississippi Baptists and the other anti-gambling groups during the recent gambling special session and their desperate attempts to demonize the opposition?

We live in a culture that is morally adrift. Prepare for many more such attacks in the future.

How legislators voted on land-based gambling (HB 45)

* denotes member of a Mississippi Baptist church

House of Representatives YEA-60 (for land-based gambling)

Name	City	District
Akins, Noel*	Oxford	12
Bailey, Willie	Greenville	49
Baker, Mark	Brandon	74
Banks, Earle	Jackson	67
Bentz, Leonard	Biloxi	116
Blackmon Jr., Edward	Canton	57
Broomfield, Billy	Moss Point	110
Brown, Cecil	Jackson	66
Burnett, Clara	Tunica	9
Calhoun, Credell	Jackson	68
Carlton, Virginia*	Columbia	100
Clark, Bryant	Pickens	47
Clarke, Alyce	Jackson	69
Coleman, Linda	Mound Bayou	29
Coleman, Mary	Jackson	65
Compretta, J.P.	Bay St. Louis	122
Davis, Lee Jarrell	Hattiesburg	102
Dedeaux, Dirk*	Gulfport	95
Denny, Bill	Jackson	64
Espy III, Henry	Clarksdale	26
Evans, James	Jackson	70
Flaggs Jr., George	Vicksburg	55
Fredericks, Frances	Gulfport	110
Guice Jr., Daniel	Ocean Springs	114
Hamilton, Frank	Hurley	109
Harrison, Esther	Columbus	41
Hinds Sr., John	Greenville	50
Holland, Steve	Plantersville	16
Holloway Sr., Gregory	Hazlehurst	76
Ishee, Roger	Gulfport	118
Janus, Michael	Biloxi	117
Johnson III, Robert	Natchez	94
Malone, Bennett	Carthage	45
Martinson, Rita	Madison	58
Mayhall Jr., W.T.	Southaven	40
Mayo, John	Clarksdale	25
Moak, Bobby*	Bogue Chitto	53
Moore, John*	Brandon	60
Morris, Leonard	Batesville	11
Myers, David	McComb	98
Norquist, David	Cleveland	28
Patterson, Randall	Biloxi	115
Peranich, Diane	Pass Christian	121
Read, John*	Gautier	112
Reeves, John*	Jackson	71
Robinson Jr., Walter	Bolton	63

Simpson Jr., James*

Smith, Clayton*

Smith, Ferr

Snowden, Greg*

Staples, Gary

Straughter, Rufus

Thomas, Sara

Upshaw, Jessica

Watson, Percy

Whittington, May

Woods, Tommy

Young Sr., Charles

Zuber III, Hank

Pass Christian

Brandon

Carthage

Meridian

Laurel

Belzoni

Indianola

Diamondhead

Hattiesburg

Schlatter

Byhalia

Meridian

Ocean Springs

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'Experiencing God' has impact on soldier

BALAD, Iraq (BP) — Almost a year has passed since Sergeant First Class Melissa Robinson-Ellis was shopping in a LifeWay Christian Store just a few days before leaving for a year-long tour of duty in Iraq.

She and fiancé Clay Washington, also a soldier, scanned the aisles for anything that might help them during their deployment: she to Balad, he to Baghdad. A business card from Robert Crawford, the store's manager in Fayetteville, N.C., provided more assistance than just the resources they bought.

"When I started to run out of Christian literature to read, I went to the [LifeWay Christian Stores] website and started surfing the adult Bible study section," Robinson-Ellis wrote in an e-mail interview with LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. She saw the LifeWay study, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, and ordered it through the Christian Growth Study Plan.

The Christian Growth Study Plan, dating back to 1902, is managed by LifeWay but is sponsored by various Southern Baptist Convention entities including the North American Mission Board and the International Mission Board. It allows church leadership and lay leaders to participate in study courses to help develop skills in leadership and Christian growth for the church.

After fulfilling study requirements, participants receive a course certification and ultimately a diploma in their respective category, either in leadership and skill development or Christian growth.

Robinson-Ellis joined the Army almost 19 years ago and served with the Army Reserves



STRENGTHENED — Sergeant First Class Melissa Robinson-Ellis, stationed in Iraq with the 18th Aviation Brigade of the XVIII Airborne Corps from Fort Bragg, N.C., has found her relationship with God strengthened by studying "Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God." (BP photo)

the previous two years. Currently, the 37-year-old is stationed at Camp Anaconda in Balad, Iraq, roughly 45 miles north of Baghdad. The base, nicknamed "Mortaritaville," sees its frequent share of attacks by insurgents.

"I think this whole experience has brought me closer to God," said Robinson-Ellis, who attends Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church in Fayetteville and Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church in Panama City, Fla., her home church and where her parents

live and care for her 11-year-old son Christian while she's away.

"When you are deployed you sometimes have a lot of free time on your hands and I love to read," she said, "so I occupied my time with studying the Word of God and reflecting on the provisions that He made for us."

Part of the 18th Aviation Brigade of the XVIII Airborne Corps out of Fort Bragg, N.C., Robinson-Ellis, an equal opportunity adviser, is responsible for ensuring that each soldier's rights are provided for and protected.

Saved and baptized at a young age, Robinson-Ellis has been in church her "whole life," and though she says she "experienced the world," her Christian values brought her "back to God." Each morning she starts her day with prayer and a short devotional and Scripture. She also used her mornings to go through the *Experiencing God* study by Henry Blackaby and Claude King.

"It helped me get through the days of being away from my son, my fiancé and my family," she reported.

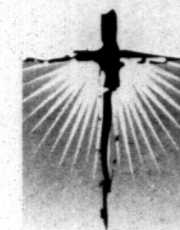
The study explores how to discover and do the will of God. Robinson-Ellis found special comfort from the section on "crisis of belief," a subject that hit close to home when her fiancé's camp in Baghdad was attacked.

"The most important thing that God taught and reinforced with me is that I could depend on Him," Robinson-Ellis said.

Robinson-Ellis recently completed the study and turned in the necessary information to receive her course certification as part of LifeWay's Christian Growth Study Plan.

Editor's note: For more information about the Christian Growth Study Plan, visit <http://www.lifeway.com/cgsp>.

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MISSISSIPPI
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THE SECOND
FRONT PAGE

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Slavery examined

LOS ANGELES (BP) — Faith-based organizations are helping lead the effort to combat a social evil in which people are sold into slavery multiple times, 200-plus participants at a recent conference on human trafficking were told. Southern Baptists are on the front lines of pushing for public policy to abolish the horrendous crimes, said Laura Lederer, senior adviser on trafficking in the U.S. State Department's Office for Democracy and Global Affairs, at the first-of-its-kind conference in Los Angeles. The Preventing Abuse Conference on Human Trafficking and Child Abduction was convened to "educate, motivate, and activate" society and pastors in the Los Angeles area. Lederer, the featured speaker who is considered an expert on the topic, said faith-based and nonprofit organizations are "at the grass-root level of this issue," which President Bush has described as one of the worst offenses against human dignity. "Baptists are at the forefront of legislation in D.C.," Lederer told Baptist Press. "They have been strategic in policy-making." An estimated 600,000 to 800,000 women, children and men are impacted every year by human trafficking, which is defined as modern-day slavery, according to the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. Trafficking victims are trapped in forced labor and sexual exploitation, and millions of people are enslaved in their own countries. A criminal ring that had forced 100 Korean girls into prostitution was broken up this summer in San Francisco. Over 1,500 trafficking victims have been rescued in Los Angeles in the past two years. For more information on how to identify victims of human trafficking or how to help, call a nationwide hotline at (888) 3737-888 or visit www.cedarsfoundation.com or www.bscoalition.org.

Looking back

10 years ago

The Foreign Mission Board appoints 38 missionaries at Broadmoor Church, Memphis, including Mississippians Robert M. and Sally Bade, Bradley D. and Lenora Beaman, David B. and Deborah Balyeat, Timothy A. and Rebecca Lightsey, and Frank R. and Dede Trotter.

20 years ago

Final payment is received on the \$260,000 sale of Camp Kittiwake, the beachfront Royol Ambassadors camp destroyed by Hurricane Camille in 1969. Proceeds from the sale will finance construction of a lodge at Central Hills Retreat near Kosciusko.

50 years ago

The Mississippi Baptist Convention appoints a committee of five to study a resolution urging Blue Mountain College be made co-educational in order to provide for more educated ministers for north Mississippi.



YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

WHERE ARE YOU?

Several years ago I wrote an article on the most repeated question in America. It had to do with folks using their cell phones and their being interference in the transmission and so the constantly repeated question was, "Can you hear me now?" There were even ads run on television showing people climbing up in trees and getting up on hillsides and asking, "Can you hear me now?" as they tried to locate that perfect spot that would allow the transmission to go through on their cellular device.

Overall I think cell phone communication has improved. All of the different services declare that they have the best or at least some form of the best connection in the nation. No doubt there are more towers and better service today than it was several years ago. It is still not unusual to hear someone ask, "Can you hear me now?" I do believe that another question has replaced it as more and more people have gone to using the mobile phone. The question that seems to be at the forefront more often than not is, "Where are you?" We are a mobile society and when you call someone on their cell phone they may answer at their home, business, or from a thousand miles away from where they live. They may be in Wal-Mart or at a sporting event. They may be fishing or staying with a loved one at the hospital. Since you just never know, many conversations begin with the phrase where are you. It is an important question.

In mid-November 2005, one of our pastors was on his way on a Thursday morning to meet some fellow ministers to play a round of golf. They had already been in contact with each other earlier, but the plan was to meet at the course about 8 o'clock and tee off. The folks who were going to be in the group were good friends and were looking forward to a morning of golf and enjoyable fellowship. It was about 8 o'clock and one of the group, Scott Walters, had not arrived at the golf course. His fellow pastor and friend, David Fortenberry, took a moment to check up on him right after eight. Instead of calling Scott, he sent a text message that simply said, "Where are you?" What David nor anyone in the group or anyone else could have known is that shortly after 8 o'clock for some



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

unknown reason Scott had lost control of his vehicle, ran off the road, and hit a tree. It was a fatal crash and this fine, young 42 year-old pastor was gone.

Since the group knew that Scott had planned to come and join them for golf, they were simply asking what his location was. Was he still at home? Was he almost to the golf course? Where was he? The strange but glorious reality was that probably when his phone received the text message, "Where are you?" the answer could have been, "I am in heaven."

The Apostle Paul clearly gives us insight into the glorious transition from the here to the

there when he tells us, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." While the friends waited for an answer to the question, "Where are you?" it did not come instantly as they had anticipated but later in the morning they would find out that he was no longer here with us, but the answer to the question was, "I am with the Lord!" There are some wonderful and pointed lessons that you and I can learn from this event.

We learn that life is brief. It is not as though we are unaware that life is short like a vapor that is here and disappears, but we become desensitized and we think that at least for us,

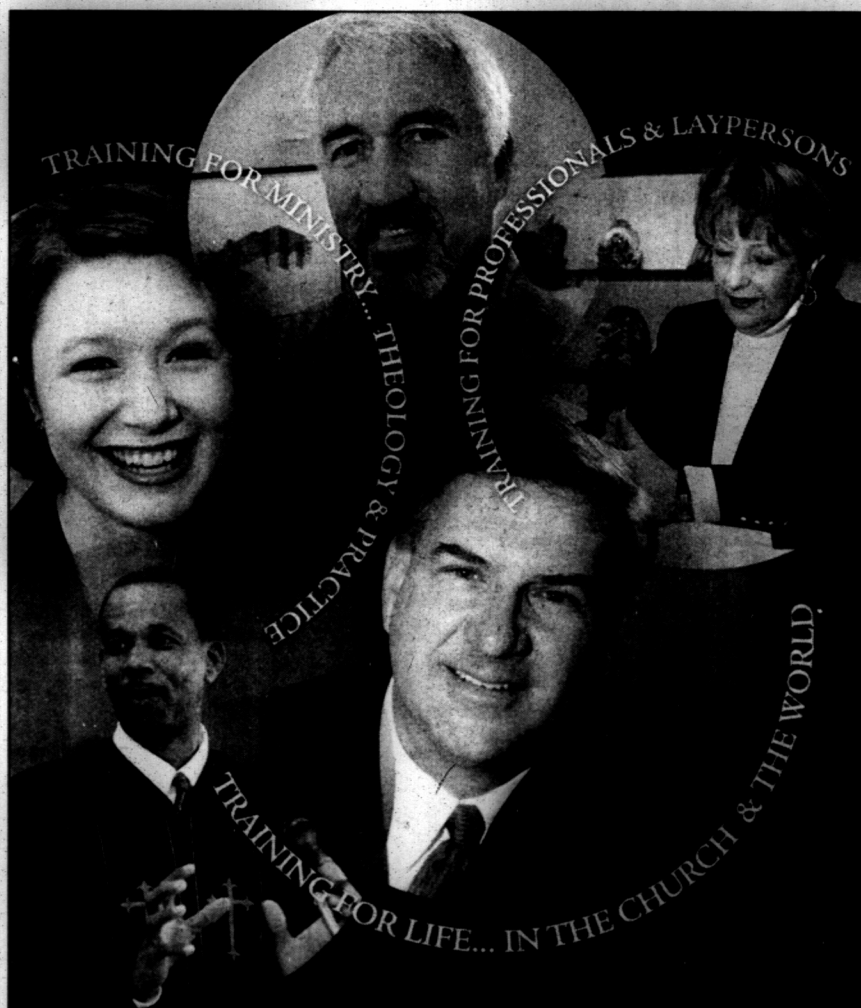
maybe not others, but for us it is going to be an extremely long life filled with ever increasing good days. But at its best life is brief, and when it is less than what we consider the norm, it seems to be much shorter. While 42 years is not long at all it is nearly a decade longer than our Lord Jesus lived here on the earth and it is not far off of the mark of the average life span nearly a hundred years ago. But still it is brief. One thing that Scott brought to life's arena was a joy and exuberance about living each day. He filled each day of life with life. He enjoyed serving the Lord, friends, family, and church. Life is filled with grief. The grief experience is not a stranger to any of us and grief is the natural response of loss. So when you lose someone it leaves an emptiness and a pain that can only be described as grief. Everyone experiences it at some time or another. It a normal and natural part of life though none of us wants it to be a part of our experience.

Christians grieve as well as unbelievers, but there is a clear distinction that God has offered to us as the Bible describes, "We sorrow, but not as those who have no hope." Our grief is temporary and laced with promises for when we who know the Lord grieve, we have His promise that we will not go through it alone. We have His strong arm to lift us up and we have the fellowship of other believers who will walk with us. We have the glorious promise that the loss and the separation will soon be over, and we will be together again.

One last wonderful lesson is that it is of utmost importance that in life we have belief. Scott Walters had long ago trusted the Lord Jesus Christ. He believed that Jesus died for Him and that He arose again and was alive forevermore. When Scott put his life in Jesus' hands he was secure forever. It is an interesting reality that everyone must believe something. There is no way around it. You are either going to believe there is a God or believe there is no God. You are either going to believe that Jesus is the Son of God who loved us and died for us or either He was just a man who misled the world. So as you consider who or what you are going to believe, let me point you to the one single source of true faith. He is the one who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life and no man comes unto the Father but by me."

You can believe Jesus for He will never leave you nor forsake you and He will never fail you. Because Scott Walters put his faith in Jesus when the question came, "Where are you?" the answer was sure. He could answer, "I am with the Lord."

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JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Perfect Attendance, First Church, Potts Camp



2. Global Outreach in Honduras, Slayden Church, Lamar



3. World Changers in Pensacola, Tishomingo Association

1. First Church, Potts Camp, honors three Sunday School members with perfect attendance: Billy McAlexander, 16 years; Lynda McAlexander, 17 years; and Madalynne Ash, 17 years.

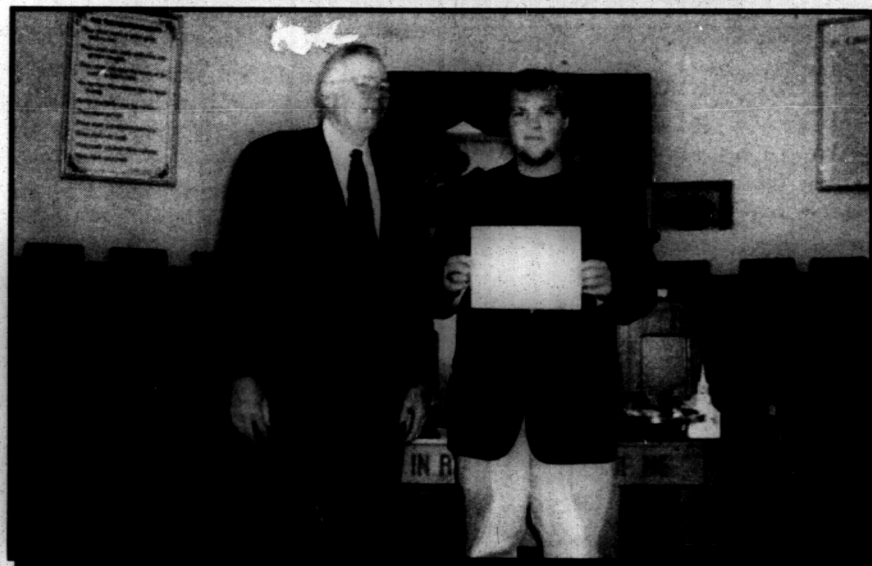
2. Craig Mynatt, Winfred Allen, and William Allen, of Slayden Church, Lamar, recently returned from Honduras where they helped with construction at the Bible College through the Global Outreach program.

3. Bobby Cobb, associational missions director for Tishomingo Association; Nancy Martin, Tishomingo Church; Stephanie Campbell, New Liberty Church; Bob and Carra Purvis, TJ and Christina Stricklen, Chris Williams, Eric Thornton, and Christ Faires from New Prospect Church joined 147 young people and their leaders July 12-16 for a World Changers national collegiate project in Pensacola, Fla. Shown are the participants.

4. Calvary Chapel, Parchman, recently baptized four new believers. Shown are deacon "Chubby" Winters; Quintarrius Carey in the baptistery, Browning Earp beside the baptistery, pastor Joe Young, and Tammy Carey and Brenda West.



5. Deacon Ordination, Calvary Church, Pascagoula



6. Patrick Ordination, Corinth Church, Heidelberg



4. Four Baptized, Calvary Chapel, Parchman

5. Calvary Church, Pascagoula, recently ordained Gene Naill and Brian Knight as deacons. Shown are Naill, pastor Johnny Beaver, and Knight.

6. Corinth Church, Heidelberg, recently ordained Darrell Scott Patrick to the ministry. Shown are Patrick and Bill Riley, pastor.

7. Reflections, a BSU ensemble from Blue Mountain College, will be performing at Shiloh Church, Big Creek, on Dec. 4, at 6:00 p.m.

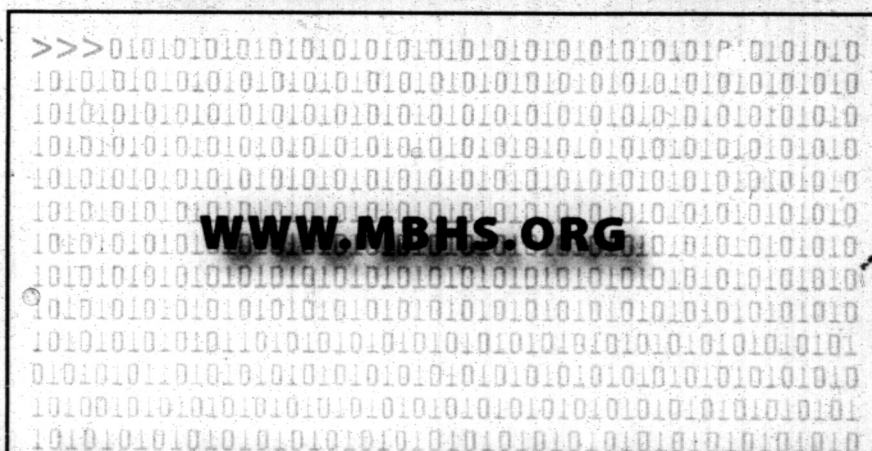
STAFF CHANGES



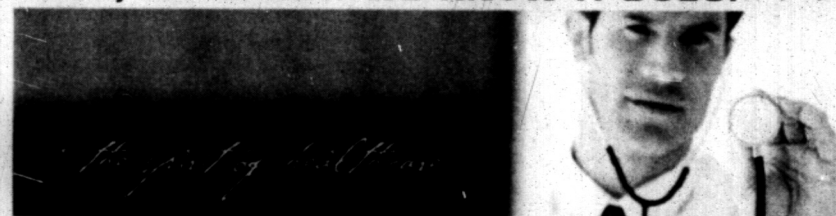
Faith Church, Leake Association, has called Stephen Lanier as pastor. Lanier is a native of Huntsville, Ala., where he previously served at Bethlehem Church. He received his education at Pensacola Christian College and New Orleans Seminary.

Plunkett

First Church, Magee, welcomes Hugh Plunkett as minister of music and senior adults. Plunkett has served as minister of music/senior adults at Clarksdale Church, Clarksdale, and minister of music/youth at Trinity Church, Carthage. He has been a member of the Mississippi Singing Churchmen since 1982 and has served as association music director for Attala, Leake, and North Delta associations.



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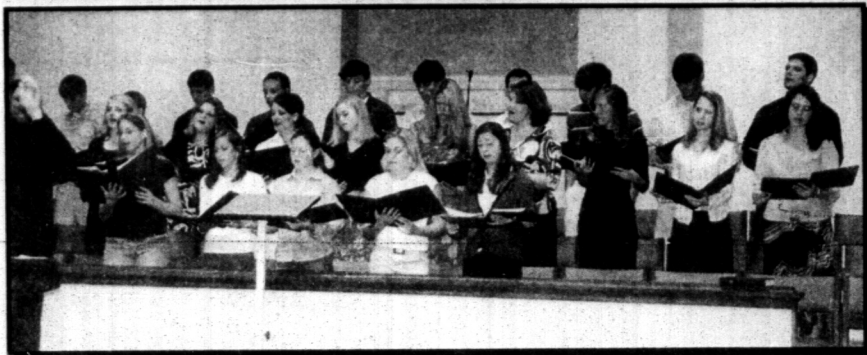
Clue: S = L

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke Nine: Twenty-Three.

COLLEGE NEWS

The annual Bobby Halford Holiday Baseball Camp for youth ages 7-17 will be conducted Dec. 28-30 at William Carey College (WCC) in Hattiesburg. The sessions will concentrate on pitching, catching and hitting, with emphasis on fundamentals and individualized instruction. Evaluation and recommendation of each player is part of the three-day session. The hours are 9 a.m.-3 p.m. on Dec. 28-29, and 9 a.m.-12 p.m. on Dec. 30. Cost is \$95 including lunch and a t-shirt. Instructors include current Carey coaches. Coach Bobby Halford was selected as 2003 NAIA Region 13 Coach of the Year. The Carey Crusaders were Conference Tournament Champions this year and also participated in the Region 13 Tournament. For more information, call the baseball office at (601) 318-6110 or the office of external relations at (601) 318-6192, or write to Bobby Halford Baseball Camp, William Carey College, 498 Tuscan Avenue, Hattiesburg, MS 39401, or email bhalford@wmcarey.edu.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



8. Youth Sunday, Slayden Church, Marshall Association

8. Youth Sunday was observed on Oct. 30 at Slayden Church, Marshall Association. The youth taught Sunday School, led the worship service, played instruments and presented a drama entitled The Stand.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

9. A clean up crew from Slayden Church, Marshall Association, recently returned from the Gulf Coast after clearing debris for local residents. Shown, front row, from left: Jamie Cruse, Joe Hurdle, Ricky Grisham, Gordon Anderson, and David Bishop. Back row: Mark Loftin, Ricky Hickman, and Joe Lundine.

10. Mt. Olive Church, Prentiss Association, honored J.P. Davis on Sept. 4 with a plaque of appreciation and elected him as minister of music emeritus. Davis has retired as minister of music after 45 years of faithful service. Shown from left, are: Bobby Cossey, pastor; Davis's wife Zelia; Davis; and Harry Old, chairman of deacons.

11. Holly Springs Church, Foxworth, will celebrate its Hanging of the Green on Sun., Nov. 27, at 10:00 a.m. The theme will be The Christmas Gift.

12. Calvary Church, Saratoga, will have a rummage sale on Dec. 3, beginning at 6:00 a.m. All proceeds will go to the building fund.

13. The choir of Flowood Church, Flowood, will present I'll Be Home for Christmas, a musical about family and hope in the golden days of radio, on Dec. 10-11 at 6:00 a.m. Nursery available.

14. Marlon Seaneey is available for supply, interim, and bi-vocational pastorate. He is a graduate of Clarke College, Mississippi College, and New Orleans Theological Seminary. He may be reached at (601) 939-0684.

15. Alton Foster, director of missions, presented L.J. Garner, chairman of the deacons, with plaques on Oct. 2 honoring Glading Church, Magnolia, for 100 years of service.

16. The annual Lakeshore Church, Jackson, Drive Through Nativity will be held Dec. 9-10, from 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. each night. This free community event helps begin celebrating the holiday season and Christ's birth. Shown are some of the participants.



9. Gulf Coast Volunteers, Slayden Church, Marshall Association



10. Davis Honored, Mt. Olive Church, Prentiss Association



15. 100 Years of Service, Glading Church, Magnolia



16. Drive Through Nativity, Lakeshore Church, Jackson



FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Why Care?

Jonah 4:1-11

By Don Hicks

Merry Christmas! December is finally here and we can enjoy the traditional Christmas season. So let's study a traditional Christmas story from the Old Testament — "Jonah and Whale."

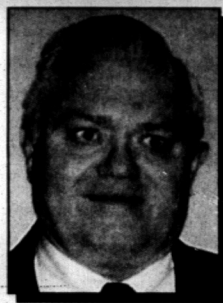
Okay, so it is not quite a traditional Christmas story — it is even from the wrong testament. Why would we study the story of Jonah to begin our study of Christmas? Jonah is the first Jewish prophet to go to another people group. If we come to understand why God sent Jonah to Nineveh then we can understand why God sent his Son.

Our focal passage begins with Jonah greatly displeased and angry. The whole reason Jonah ran off in the first place was because he did not want God to redeem the people of Nineveh. Jonah hated the peo-

ple of Nineveh and he believed God should always give preference to his people (Israel). Jonah had forgotten the meaning of God's call to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3:

"The Lord had said ... 'I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'"

Before we are critical of Jonah we need to give him credit for a great understanding of God's loving nature. In verse 2 Jonah said, "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity." This loving nature is the reason God sent His Son to provide salvation for all people.



Hicks

Doesn't Jonah's description of God as gracious and compassionate sound the same theme as John 3:16-17? "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him."

Jonah followed this great explanation of God's graciousness and compassion by saying "Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." Jonah would rather die than tell his enemies that God loved them. That is the reason God prepared a large fish to carry Jonah to Nineveh. God was committed to offering His love to the people of Nineveh. To fully appreciate God's commitment to loving people you need to realize that this is a real historical act of God. Jesus cited this event three times in Matthew and

Luke. Jesus said His three days in the tomb paralleled Jonah's three days in the belly of the large fish.

Jonah's mission trip by whale to Nineveh, Jesus' virgin birth in Bethlehem's stable, and Jesus' resurrection after three days in the tomb are signs of God's love. God was making repentance possible for the people of ancient Nineveh and the lost of today.

The "why" of Christmas for God has existed from before creation, through the events of Jonah's life, the birth of Jesus, and death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This Christmas season, how will you respond to the possibility of telling others of God's love? Will you run as Jonah did when first called? Will you sit outside of town watching to see how others respond to the good news of God's love?

If you do sit dispassionately observing the lost around you, you may very well respond with the despondency of Jonah when he asks God to take his life. Jonah was angry that God didn't kill off his enemies in Nineveh. Then, he became

despondent over the death of a weed-like vine. The death of his vine was of more interest to Jonah than the lostness of people God had created and loves.

God challenged Jonah about this saying, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people... Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

When we consider the question "Why Care," shouldn't we consider the folks around us that God wants to know of His love? God sent His Son at Christmas to demonstrate that Jonah's assessment was right when he said: "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love."

God loves the two-thirds of Mississippians who will not be in anyone's church while we study this lesson.

Hicks is a member of First Church, Clinton.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

"Need for Mercy"

Romans 9:1-6, 14-24

By Shirley Heap

During one winter season our youngest son, commuting from college, hit a deer on three different occasions, each time totaling his car. Of course they were all beyond his control. On another night due to lack of rest he fell asleep and careened off a ravine into a thicket of young trees; therefore another vehicle was lost. Needless to say, the insurance company had no mercy but he wasn't really concerned about that. His greatest concern was mercy from his Dad. We all can relate to this incident in some fashion with our Heavenly Father. We may all be confident that our Father is patient, just, and merciful. Oh, give thanks, for our need is great. May we see our lost friends' need much as Paul did?

Reflect God's Concern, Rom. 9:1-5

Paul's concern for his countrymen is the essence of these verses. Many unanswered questions were arising from Jews, converted and otherwise. Paul's writing encourages understanding for the believer and the unbeliever, that walking in faith would show others God's love and mercy. Paul had a burdened heart for his people (the Jews) and expresses this in these verses. He had such great sorrow and tells of his "unceasing anguish" in his heart. He even speaks of a wish the he could be cut off from Christ for the sake of his own people. How could he ever have such a burden? Could we also feel this great concern for the lost? Christ's example of great com-



Heap

passion for all is ours for the asking. Our prayer should be for this same concern. Such great opportunities ignored, such great blessings awaited God's chosen people, yet they rejected them. Paul speaks of the adoption, glory, covenants, law, the worship, promises, the patriarchs, and the greatest of all, the Incarnate Messiah. Hearing and seeing all these, they felt it still necessary to live by the law. This sorrow was reflected in Paul's prayer. May we become aware of those around us who do not "walk by faith" (2 Cor. 5:7) and therefore cannot realize what Jesus meant when He said, "I come to fulfill the law..." Lord, teach us how to reflect this concern in our daily lives.

Remember God's Mercy, Rom. 9:6, 14-18

God is all-knowing and sovereign. These verses have been interpreted many ways. Some see a doctrine that God

chooses certain ones for salvation (predestination) and others see a doctrine of who will be saved and who will be lost (double predestination). Others believe the elect are not purposely picked by God, but are called the elect because they have chosen to respond to God's call to salvation. After reading the previous verses could we ever believe God's word "had failed?" Never! "He has mercy on whomever He chooses and hardens the heart of whomever he chooses." In verse 18, "Harden" is used to describe God's sovereignty and shows us that in His great mercy and love he has given us a free will. As human beings we have great responsibilities concerning our relationship with our Creator. God wants a people who choose to love him. The choice is ours. God is all mercy. The total explanation of God's sovereignty we may never know, but we do know that God is always true to His Word. He is always just and offers mercy to all who will receive His Son.

Recognize God's Patience, Rom. 9:19-24

Who are we to question God's ways? Even though we would like to know the whys and why nots, we are only the clay in the Potter's hands. This is hard for us as strong-willed beings to accept. We must relax and let God mold each of us. This is faith in action. Verse 22, Paul begins, "What if God held back His wrath with great enduring patience" and in verse 23 Paul says, "He did." Why? So that He might make known the riches of His glory prepared beforehand. (Gen. 3:15). "God's ways are not our ways" (Isa. 55:8) and God's thoughts are not our thoughts.

Dear Lord, thank you for your love, mercy, and patience in dealing with your children. This blessing is extended to all. "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come...' (Rev. 22:17) Our greatest reward is to know we are the children of the "Living God" (Rom. 9:26). Thank You, Lord. Amen.

Heap is a member of Calvary Church, Waynesboro.

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The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted.



Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts

are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to crop-

ping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

President attends Chinese church during Asia visit

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — U.S. President George W. Bush and his wife Laura took time out from their recent Asia tour to attend Beijing's Gangwashi Church, a congregation registered with the Chinese government, during a morning worship service Nov. 20.

Outside the church building afterward, Bush said, "My hope is that the government of China will not fear Christians who gather to worship openly. A healthy society is a society that welcomes all faiths and gives people a chance to express themselves through worship with the Almighty."

The president signed the church's guest book, "May God bless the Christians of China, George Bush," according to The Dallas Morning News.

Later in the day, the president told reporters he had talked to Chinese leaders about both religious and political freedom. "A society which recognizes religious freedom is a society which will recognize political freedoms, as well," he said.

China oppresses not only Protestants in underground churches but unregistered Roman Catholics, Tibetan Buddhists, Uighur Muslims and the Falun Gong, a meditation sect, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has reported.

The government also places restrictions upon registered churches, including limitations on what can be taught and preached. The USCIRF has reported that leaders of registered churches in some regions have been forced to denounce the Falun Gong or support government rules.

In one of the more recent examples of repression of Christians, Cai Zhuohua, 34, leader of an underground Beijing church, was sentenced to three years in prison for printing Bibles illegally, Reuters News Service reported. His wife Xiao Yunfei and her brother Xiao Gaowen were given two-year and 18-month sentences, respectively, by a Chinese court, according to Reuters.

Southern Baptist church-state specialist Richard Land, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville and a USCIRF commissioner, commended Bush for his attendance at a church service and his promotion of religious liberty while he was in China.

Land told Baptist Press he is "delighted the president chose to highlight the cause of religious freedom while he was in China. He has done this before, and it does help to keep the issue

on the front burner both in world opinion and with Chinese government officials."

Land's August visit to China and recent crackdowns on Christian leaders demonstrate how limited religious freedom is in the world's most populous country under a communist regime. Land and six other USCIRF members spent 15 days in China. The bipartisan panel reported repression continues of unapproved religious groups and urged the U.S. government to take a variety of steps to influence reform by the Beijing government.

"While it is clear that more space has been created for religious expression than previously existed in China or ever existed in the Soviet Union, it is also true that there is still significant government control," Land said. "What China has is limited toleration of religious expression through registered churches, which are strictly regulated and monitored."

"This is why perhaps as many as five times as many Christ-

ians choose to worship in unregistered venues, even with the constant threat of arrest and persecution, than worship in registered venues," he said. "I'm sure the president chose to worship in a registered church setting for the same reason that our commission chose not to meet with members of the underground and unregistered church, i.e., it would expose the underground church and Christians to possible retaliation from the government after the American officials had returned home."

U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist of Tennessee named Land in July to the nine-member USCIRF. Land served on the panel from 2001-04 as an appointee by Bush.

The USCIRF advises the White House and Congress on the condition of religious liberty in other countries. The president selects three members of the panel, while congressional leaders name the other six members.


OBITUARIES

John Scott Walters of Stringer died Nov. 10 in an automobile accident in Smith County. Funeral services were held Nov. 12, at 11:00 a.m. at Edon Church, Stringer, where Walters served as pastor. He also served in churches in Louisiana and Mississippi. Walters was a dream teller with Catch-A-Dream Foundation and was involved with World Changers through the North American Mission Board and the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force.

Walters received his Bachelor of Science from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1994 and his Master of Arts from New Orleans Seminary in 1996.

He is survived by his wife Ramona and two sons, Cole and Seth.

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